DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 042 577 RE 002 844

AUTHOR McGinnis, Dorothy J.
TITLE The Teacher's Approach to the Study of the Disabled Reader, A Homeopathic Concept.
PUB DATE 7 May 70
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the International Reading Association conference, Anaheim, Cal., May 6-9, 1970

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.75
DESCRIPTORS *Goal Orientation, Language Experience Approach, Motivation, *Reading Diagnosis, *Reading Difficulty, *Remedial Reading

ABSTRACT

Classroom treatment for the disabled reader in which the child is permitted to make reading errors and then to develop control over them is described. Homeopathic treatment emphasizes meeting the child's reading needs as they develop rather than determining causal factors and providing drastic remediation. A goal-oriented process of instruction is described in which the teacher stimulates, informs, and guides her pupils in accomplishing projects and attaining individual goals. A fifth-grade project in which each child prepares his own books (writing, illustating, and binding) illustrates the implementation of this concept. Three factors identified by research which influence learning effectiveness are related: intrinsic motivation, careful material selection, and meaningful practice. References are included. (CM)

ED042577

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Dorothy J. McGinnis

Western Michigan University

Kalamazoo, Michigan 49001

The Teacher's Approach to the Study of the Disabled Reader, A Homeopathic Concept

Session: The Disabled Reader

Thursday, May 7, 10:45-11:45 a.m.

Teachers in the classroom can provide remediation for children having difficulty in making a satisfactory reading adjustment. Students of education, without a background in clinical psychology and without adequate equipment or time for detailed investigation of causal factors, can make use of a homeopathic approach in their attempts to provide treatment for children with reading disabilities. It is the purpose of this paper to show how this goal can be attained.

RE002 844

The Teacher's Function in Remediation

The classroom teacher can meet the reading needs of 92 per cent of the school population. She can observe the child in the classroom environment, can identify his problems, and can help him solve them. The teacher can learn to know the student, his interests, his aptitudes, and his needs. She can develop a knowledge of his home and neighborhood. She can observe daily his contacts with his peers and can appraise his social and emotional adjustment. She can evaluate his ability to sustain effort, to make use of textbooks and reference materials, and to achieve his goals. She can observe his activities as he reads silently and orally and can evaluate frequently the reading skills he has achieved and identify those that are essential to his progress and which at the present he lacks. She can study his reading errors and inadequacies in a natural classroom environment without making him feel that he is a "reading problem" suffering from dyslexia, brain damage, or perceptual abnormalities. In a humanizing manner she can aid the child as he attempts to achieve his objectives and carry out his projects. She can make use of his

disabilities as opportunities for instruction and "on the spot" therapy. Her treatment is homeopathic in nature.

Definition of Homeopathy

Homeopathy is a form of treatment which assumes that such agents cure disease as in health produce similar symptoms and that the more finely a drug is divided for administration the more effective it becomes. In the treatment of a fever, for example, the physician, recognizing that an elevation in temperature is nature's way of combating an infection, would administer medication which in a normal person would produce similar symptoms. The elevation of temperature would be facilitated and yet controlled. In other words, small homeopathic doses would be prescribed rather than massive allopathic administration of drugs.

Homeopathic treatment applied to a disabled reader involves permitting the child in a natural situation to make reading errors and then to develop control over them. It emphasizes meeting his reading needs <u>as they develop</u> rather than determining causal factors and then providing drastic remediation. For example, one third grade

teacher observed that when Robert was asked to read, he encountered many words which he did not recognize. Furthermore, he made more errors on small common words than he did on polysyllabic words and frequently knew a word in one situation and not in another. The teacher asked Robert to read a list of words which she had selected from a book he was attempting to read. Then she exposed the same list of words rapidly using a teacher-made tachistoscope. The child made a greater number of word errors when the device was used than he did when viewing the same words for longer periods of time. On the basis of this and previous observations, the teacher assumed that for immediate success in reading Robert needed to increase his sight vocabulary. She explained this to Robert and together they worked out plans whereby he could achieve this goal. Some of the procedures which they employed involved the development and reading of experience charts and the use of interesting stories at a level of difficulty which Robert could read with pleasure. In addition, they used tachistoscopic materials which encouraged rapid recognition of words rather than detailed inspection. The introduction of

several Dolch Games added to the interest of the occasion. Robert was also encouraged to prepare and maintain a card file of words he wanted to learn. These words were incorporated into interesting stories written by Robert and the teacher so that the words were repeated frequently and at carefully spaced intervals. These guided activities were homeopathic in nature.

In dealing with the disabled reader, both the homeopathic and allopathic approaches are recommended. In this paper, however, it is the writer's purpose to illustrate and set forth some of the advantages of homeopathic treatment which can be applied by the classroom teacher as she identifies and meets the reading needs of the disabled reader.

Application in the Classroom

In showing how homeopathic remediation can be applied in the classroom, the writer will describe a goal-oriented process of instruction, provide an illustration of homeopathic treatment, point out possible effects on the individual, and set forth some psychological aspects of homeopathic remediation.

The Goal-Oriented Process

The effective teacher stimulates, informs, and guides her students. She focuses her attention upon each child as he, in a goal-oriented activity, attempts to achieve his purpose. She refrains from teaching reading as an academic subject and instead aids the student in controlling his reading errors and developing his reading skills so that he can accomplish his projects and attain his goals. The student at any level is not concerned with learning about reading but in developing reading skills which are useful to him in the realization of his objectives. The intrusion of exercises based upon phonics, structural analysis, and contextual clues before the student has discovered their worth to him can lessen his interest in reading and retard his progress. These forms of treatment should be employed by the classroom teacher only in their proper place and always with discretion. The teacher is not primarily concerned with measuring degrees of reading skills and with determining amounts of growth in knowledge about reading. Instead she applies her instruction where and when it is needed so as to aid the individual in overcoming his difficulty.

Her goal is to help him use reading as an effective tool and as a source of pleasure and satisfaction. She places him in a situation where he can make mistakes and by means of timely, yet unobtrusive, instruction develop control over his errors. In this process, books are not always necessary until the child has developed an interest in reading and has acquired an adequate sight vocabulary. In the early stages of learning to read, an informal approach can be utilized. Charts and records based upon the child's experience can be employed in a dictating-writing-reading situation. The child can express his ideas in his language. In the use of word symbols, phonics and structural analysis can be applied at the proper time and place but never until there is a well-defined need. Instruction is relevant and is recognized by the student as an aid in helping him accomplish his purpose. In a child-centered, goal-oriented approach the child can prepare his own books, illustrate, and bind that which he has dictated. This can lead to a feeling of accomplishment and to stimulation for further creativity. Feedback can be important.

Homeopathic Approach in the Classroom

A group of five children in a fifth grade reading class were designing and binding several short compositions which each had written. Christopher who was nearly two years retarded in his reading asked to participate in the activities of the group. This boy with an IQ on the Stanford Binet of 136 had a dislike for reading and saw no reason why he should put forth the necessary effort to learn. His permissive parents who were employed in a manufacturing plant had little time for recreation and still less to spend with their two children. Christopher's request was granted and he immediately began to write a description of a crystal radio set and how one could be constructed. Books which dealt with cat whiskers, galena, coils, condensers, and head phones and which were written at approximately the third grade level were read for the purpose of acquiring essential information. In providing aid when needed, his teacher introduced structural analysis and showed Christopher how to make effective use of the dictionary. Words and their meanings were studied and when necessary his teacher showed him and several other members of the class how to

write paragraphs and organize these into larger thought units. Christopher wrote and rewrote. Finally his material was ready for typing. When this was completed, he was encouraged to illustrate his work with drawings and actually bind in hard cloth covers the eight pages of his manuscript. In this goal-oriented process use was made of cardboard, cloth, drymount, a warm iron, and masking tape. When the nicely bound book emerged, Christopher was delighted. He showed it to his friends, read it to his parents, and discussed its contents with his grandfather. The young author was "turned on" and in the process had taken a big step to purposeful reading.

The Individual in Treatment

The child in the classroom who has difficulty in learning to read needs to develop responsibility for self evaluation and the achievement of his objectives. The goal-oriented process makes it possible for him to assume the initiative in overcoming his reading disabilities. He is given an opportunity to acquire an objective attitude in appraising his successes and his failures. He develops a higher degree of self confidence as he, with well motivated instruction, is permitted to

experience difficulties in reading and develop control over them. In this homeopathic treatment the child is the center of all instruction and the source of all purposeful activity. He is on his own and learns to take more responsibility for his progress in reading. The teacher stimulates, informs, and guides. In this triad, the emphasis should be placed upon stimulation and guidance.

Some Psychological Aspects

Some careful research (2) has identified factors which influence the effectiveness of learning. Motivation, nature of material to be read, and conditions of practice should be given careful consideration by the teacher.

* Learning is more effective when the motivation is intrinsic, i.e., when the student is interested in the learning task and can apply that which is learned in the realization of his own goals. In this manner learning is rewarding and is based upon intent to learn. Motivation can lead to interest. Immediately the question can be raised, Why does the child become interested in learning to read? Is it the story or the mastery of

reading skills? Is it meaning which he seeks or decoding skills such as structural analysis, phonetic analysis, and other approaches to the identification of words? It has been demonstrated that the effectiveness of verbal learning depends upon the meaningfulness of the material. This is not only true with the maladjusted reader but with the beginning reader as well.

* The careful selection of materials can facilitate learning to read. Consideration must be given to the reader's experiential background for his mental content determines not only his interest but the quantitative and qualitative aspects of meaning he will be able to generate. In all instances, the interest level of reading materials must be high. Furthermore, the instructional level must be high enough to unmask the child's inadequacies, weaknesses, and reading errors. The child's temporary frustration can aid the perceptive teacher in her identification of those areas in which instruction must be provided. The teacher will permit the child to experience inadequacies and then provide sufficient means for their control. In this manner the child learns to appreciate the value of instruction.

* Repeated activities or practice with intent to improve can facilitate learning to read. If the normal child wants to improve his reading and intends to increase his reading skills, progress can be made. The teacher can help him identify his goals and, if they are to be effective, they must seem attainable to the learner. Learning is facilitated as the child's objective is more closely approached. Drill, unaccepted by the individual, is allopathic treatment and, like castor oil, should only be considered in an emergency. Even practice, under supervision, must lead to progress which is apparent to the learner and which provides feedback for greater motivation. All desirable responses, if they are to become permanent, must be reinforced.

Summary

The teacher of the disabled reader should permit him to manifest his inadequacies in reading without disapproval. She should determine the specific kinds of errors which he makes and why he makes them. She should meet his reading needs when and where they become apparent as the child strives to attain his goals. Her

remediation in the classroom is homeopathic and not allopathic.

References

1. Carter, Homer L. J., and Dorothy J. McGinnis, Diagnosis and Treatment of the Disabled Reader. New York: Macmillan Company, 1970.

2. Ruch, Floyd L., Psychology and Life, Fifth Edition. Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1958, Chap. 12.